



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS SOLDIERS BOUND FOR AFGHANISTAN

A deployment ceremony was held for 11 Soldiers of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment Friday, Feb. 15, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. The Rapid City-based 129th will deploy to Afghanistan for a nine-month tour in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The unit will provide public affairs support, facilitate civilian news media coverage and assist and advise members of the Afghanistan National Army on public affairs operations.

Maj. Wayne Asscherick, 129th commander, said, "Our mission has three separate and equally important parts; to do what we do best, and that is produce public affairs products in the form of print and broadcast stories and photographs; manage the media embed process and coordinate for civilian news media to be able to embed with combat units so they can let the world know what is happening in Afghanistan; teach, coach, assist and advise members of the Afghan National Army on public affairs matters."

Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG, were featured speakers at the ceremony.

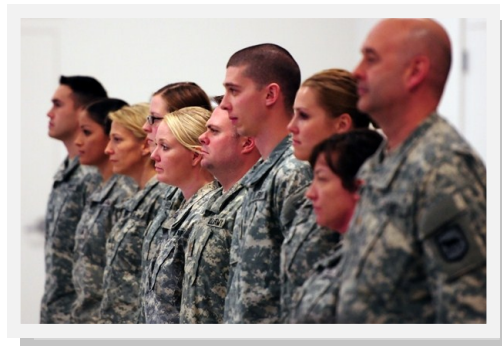
"I know today is a very proud day for you," said Reisch. "These activation ceremonies are all too common and we've had many of them in the SDNG. Over and over again, our units have gone over and successfully completed their mission and they've come back and have added to the 151-year legacy of the South Dakota Guard. There is no question in my mind that this unit will do exactly that."

This is the third mobilization for the 129th – deploying to Fort Riley, Kan. in 2003 and MacDill Air Force Base, Fla./Qatar in 2006 – both in support of OEF.

The unit will report to Fort Dix, N.J., and complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deploying overseas. Seven other additional Soldiers from Oregon, Washington, Maryland, Massachusetts and South Carolina will join the unit when they arrive at Fort Dix.

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VABHHCS TO HOST WOMEN VETERANS RETREAT

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) will host a free, semi-annual Women Veterans' Retreat through the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Outpatient Treatment Program. The retreat will be held April 19-21, at the Fort Meade VA Medical Center, two miles east of Sturgis.

The retreat is for women veterans of all eras, from all across the country, diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as well as female family members – wives, significant others, mothers, adult daughters, etc. – of male veteran's diagnosed with PTSD.

The retreat will focus on veterans' treatment and addresses psychological, physical, social and spiritual issues related to PTSD. The retreats provide a unique opportunity for women to learn more about the effects of war, as well as other types of trauma. The primary emphasis is to learn how to cope with the devastating effects PTSD can have on veterans and family members' lives. The retreat program also encourages participants to examine problem areas in their lives and help them make healthy changes and choices. There will be a particular emphasis on developing healthier coping strategies and increasing one's social support network.

"The Women's Retreat, in its 20th year, seeks to help participants examine some of the basic questions in their lives," said the retreat coordinator, Cathy Edler. "Facilitators from the VA volunteer their time to help participants build a community of people who are willing to take time to support each other. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the basis of their values and beliefs, as well as opportunities to identify short and long-term goals as a means of discovering or renewing inner resources."

The retreat is offered free of charge. All meals and lodging are provided at no cost to eligible participants through the generous donations of the Disabled American Veterans Charitable Trust, as well as other veteran's service organizations and interested groups and individuals who want to support this beneficial program.

The retreat is held at the Fort Meade VA Medical Center, beginning at noon on Friday, April 19, and concludes at approximately 1 p.m. on Sunday, April 21.

Early registration is encouraged as participants must be pre-screened. To be screened and register, please contact the PTSD Outpatient Treatment Program at 605-720-7449 or 1-800-743-1070, extension 7449. Travel eligibility inquiries should be directed to 605-720-7103.



AMERICAN
WOMEN
VETERANS

VETERANS DAY—EVERY DAY!

Talk to anyone of the residents or the staff at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and they will tell you that “Every Day is Veterans Day” at the Home!

Last week, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, Adjutant General of the South Dakota National Guard and Secretary of the South Dakota Department of the Military, had the honor and privilege to present U. S. Army Veteran Earl Weiss, a veteran at the Home, with some long, over-due medals earned during the Korean War.

Maj. Gen. Reisch presented Weiss, 85, who was from Parmalee, with a Korean Service Medal (with three bronze stars attached), a National Defense Service Medal, and a United Nations Service Medal. Weiss entered the service on June 1951 and was discharged June 1953.

Larry Wilcox, superintendent for the Home, assisted with the presentation.



Photo courtesy of the Rapid City Journal

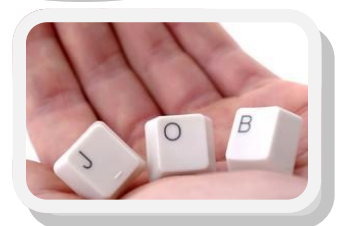
YANKTON CAREER FAIR

The South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation will host their third annual Yankton Career Fair on Thursday, April 11, 2013. The Fair will be held at the Regional Technical Education Center in Yankton (1200 W. 21st Street) from 1:00 pm—6:00 pm.

This third annual event, affords businesses a great opportunity to recruit potential employees. Sponsors of this event include: South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation, Regional Technical Education Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, VFW, VFW Post 791 Ladies Auxiliary, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans and the Yankton Office of Economic Development.

If you are interested in sponsoring a booth for this event, please contact Mike Murphy or Lacey Curr at 605-668-2913.

We encourage you to share this information with veterans and their spouses.



VABHHCS WELCOMES NEW SUICIDE PREVENTION COORDINATOR

Joanne Barreno has been selected as the new Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) at the VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS).

In her new role, Joanne will work to ensure appropriate measures are taken to prevent suicide in the VABHHCS veteran population. She will facilitate suicide prevention strategies through education, monitoring, and coordination of activities. Joanne will assess veterans at high risk, track appointments, and coordinate enhanced care as needed. As SPC, she will ensure veterans identified as high risk are monitored and maintain communication through phone calls and mailings. Joanne will work in collaboration with the VA Veterans Crisis Line staff and others to provide confidential support and referral for veterans in crisis. She will also provide educational resources to medical providers, veterans, family members, and community members about risk factors and warning signs for suicide.

Joanne began her career at VABHHCS in 2008 after transferring from the Vet Center Outstation in Martin, SD. She has been a social worker for various programs at the Hot Springs VA Medical Center and the Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Pierre. Joanne also provided outpatient mental health services to Eagle Butte, McLaughlin, Rosebud, and Winner VA clinics while stationed at Pierre. She completed her Master of Social Work at the University at Buffalo, the State University of New York and Bachelor of Social Work at Buffalo State College.

Joanne grew up on her dad's reservation territory, Cattaraugus Indian Reservation in Irving, New York. She has been a career federal employee since 1985. Joanne is a certified foster parent through Lakota Oyate Wakanyeja Owicakiyapi, Inc. (LOWO). She is also an enrolled Oneida band member from Six Nations Reserve of the Grand River.

Joanne replaces Terri Ellingson who was the acting Suicide Prevention Coordinator.



Upcoming Events

Mar. 8—SFVAHCS Veterans Arts and Crafts Show

Mar. 14—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Fort Meade

Apr. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Apr. 11—Yankton Career Fair—Regional Technical Education Center—1:00-6:00 pm

April 19-21—VABHHCS Women Veterans Retreat—Ft. Meade VA Medical Center

May 3-5—DAV State Convention—The Lodge—Deadwood

May 11—Yellow Ribbon for the 935th—Rapid City

May 19—Yellow Ribbon for the 927th—Sioux Falls

Jul. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am



Valentines might have been a day late for Sgt. Christopher Hathcock, a member of Detachment 1, Bravo Company, 935th Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard. Hathcock holds his 10-day-old son, Trace Dean, for the first time at the airport in Sioux Falls, S.D., on Feb. 15, 2013, after returning from a nine-month deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Hathcock, a resident of Harrisburg, S.D., was also reunited with his wife, Spc. Tara Hathcock, who is also a member of the 935th

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